

# Kittatinny Ridge and Valley Region

## Northwest New Jersey Skylands

### Location and Setting

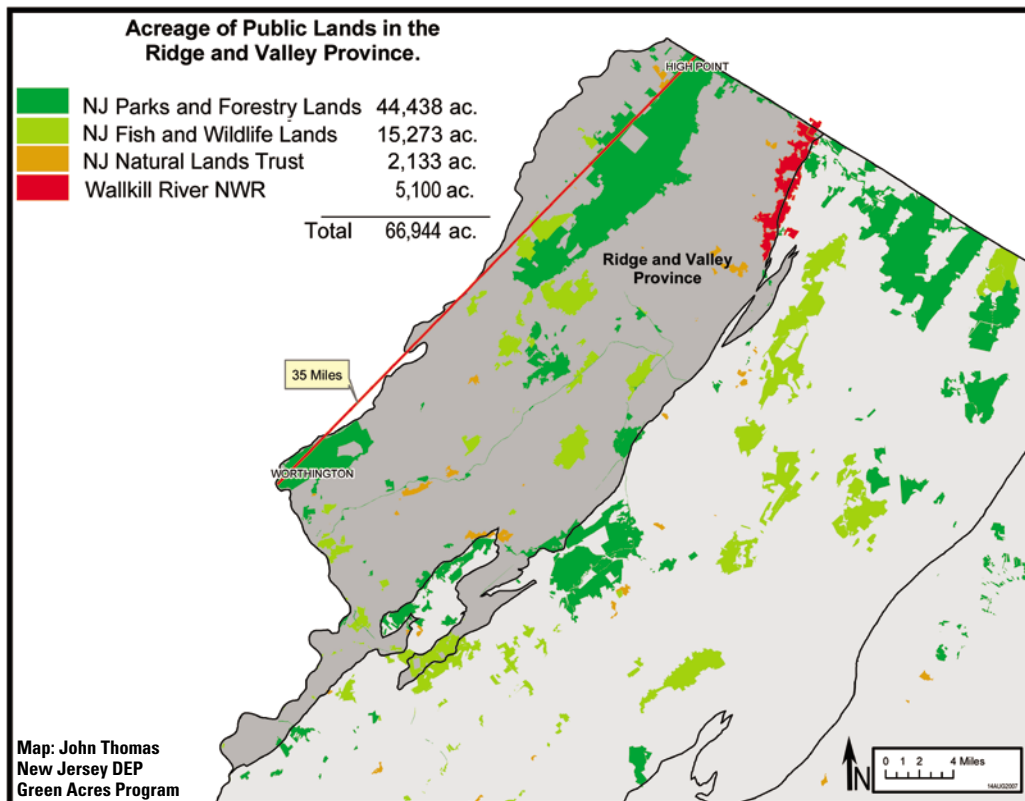
The Kittatinny Ridge and Valley is part of the Appalachian Ridge and Valley region located in northwest New Jersey, southeast New York, and northeast Pennsylvania.

This region offers amazing natural wonders to residents of the Garden State, sharply countering New Jersey's image as the land of the Turnpike, oil refineries, and industrial zones. The region consists of rugged, elongate ridges, steep slopes, rocky outcroppings, ravines, valleys, forested floodplains, and freshwater wetlands, providing corridors for wide-ranging mammals, raptors, and passerines. The Kittatinny Ridge in New Jersey lies east of the Delaware River and west of the Paulins Kill, Kittatinny, and Wallkill valleys. About 346,838 acres (542 square miles) in size (see map), the area attracts hikers, campers, birders, fishermen, boaters, hunters, and photographers.

The Appalachian Trail runs along the eastern edge of the Kittatinny. The Kittatinny Ridge and Valley region is surrounded by undeveloped trails, riparian corridors, and watercourses. The area is 53 percent forest, 18 percent agricultural lands, and 14 percent wetlands. Urban areas occupy approximately 12 percent of the region.

### Protected Areas

- High Point State Park (15,826 acres)
- Stokes State Forest (16,066 acres)
- Worthington State Forest (6,584 acres)
- Jenny Jump State Forest (4,288 acres)
- 12 State wildlife management areas (approximately 19,000 total acres)
- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, New Jersey portion (31,000 acres)
- Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge (5,100 acres)
- Swartswood State Park (2,472 acres)
- Wild and Scenic River designation Delaware River (approximately 35 miles)
- numerous natural areas and preserves managed by The Nature Conservancy and Ridge and Valley Conservancy



### Why the Region is Important

From 1,803 feet at High Point to 400 feet above sea level on the valley floor, Kittatinny Ridge and Valley offer a broad array of habitat types supporting a wide variety of wildlife. The region spans 35 miles from High Point State Park and Stokes State Forest to the north and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Worthington State Forest to the south, providing forested greenway for wide-ranging mammals such as black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and bobcats (*Lynx rufus*), and raptors such as red-shouldered hawks (*Bufo lineatus*) and the American bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

A contiguous, maturing, hardwood forest covers most of the uplands, trees include oak (*Quercus* sp.), maple (*Acer* spp.), birch (*Betula* spp.), ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), aspen (*Populus* spp.), hickory (*Carya* spp.), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*). High elevations and dry ridges are covered with pitch pine-scrub oak and mixed oak forest communities. Along the shady slopes, hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)-hardwood forest occurs in ravines created by small streams that flow from the ridge. A dozen rare communities such as the Atlantic white-cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) swamps, black spruce (*Picea mariana*)-tamarack (*Larix laricina*) bogs, and vernal pools occur sporadically in this region.



Dwarf wedgemussel



USFWS/Nora Murdock

Small-wholed pogonia

## Federally Listed Species in the Kittatinny Ridge and Valley Region

### Endangered

**Indiana bat** (*Myotis sodalis*) – potential summer foraging and roosting habitat  
**Dwarf wedgemussel** (*Alasmodonta heterodon*)

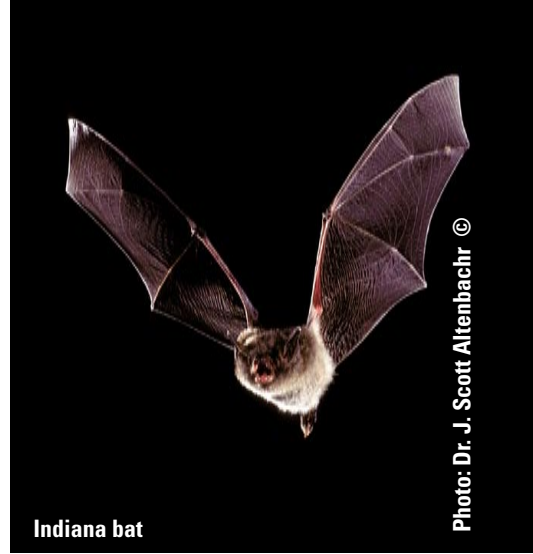
### Threatened

**Bog turtle** (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*)  
**Small-wholed pogonia** (*Isotria medeoloides*)



Bog turtle

USFWS/Walkill NWR



Indiana bat

Photo: Dr. J. Scott Altenbach ©

### Rare in New Jersey

One of the most striking features of the Kittatinny mountains are shale cliff and rock outcrop communities, rare in New Jersey, which harbor rare flora and fauna, including the State-listed (threatened) timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*). One of the rarest wild orchids in eastern North America, the federally listed (threatened) small-wholed pogonia, grows on gently sloping ground in the hardwood forest.

East of the ridge, the limestone valley contains glacial lakes, wet meadows, sinkhole ponds, and vernal pools that are home to the largest concentration of federally listed (threatened) bog turtles in the State. Several creeks and streams support native eastern brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and the federally listed (endangered) dwarf wedgemussel. To the west of the ridge, the floodplain forests along the Delaware River provide excellent wintering habitat for bald eagles. The region's forage, topography, water availability, and mountains, provide good habitat for rare species such as fishers (*Martes pennanti*) and federally listed (endangered) Indiana bats.

### What Problems the Region Faces

Since the Kittatinny Ridge and Valley is within commuting distance of New York City, residential and commercial development pressures are alarming. The recent passage of the Highlands Protection Act in New Jersey has focused attention on development which threatens area wildlife with loss, alteration, and fragmentation of all habitat types. Continued development of open space will degrade water quality, alter wetlands, and impact the habitat of bog turtle and other sensitive species. Maintaining and protecting open space and expanding greenways between urban areas are critical in preserving the wildlife, plants, and natural communities of the Kittatinny Ridge and Valley.

### Benefits of Open Space and Greenways

- **balance to sprawling urban development**
- **interconnected natural area network that provides public access and recreational opportunities**
- **conservation and restoration of natural resources**

### How the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is Helping to Solve the Problems

To prevent further decline of plant and animal species and the natural communities, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plays critical roles in: (1) assisting landowners and farmers to restore habitat; (2) implementing recovery actions for federally listed species; and (3) promoting conservation planning, including open space and greenways.

Since 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program has carried out 24 projects in the region with private landowners, restoring 189 acres of wetlands, 83 acres of uplands, and 3 miles of riparian habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also restored over 1,400 acres of grasslands in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### Who our Partners are

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners with numerous agencies throughout the State that offer strategies to preserve the most critical areas for long-term protection of plants, animals, and natural communities in the region through land acquisition, monetary donation, and estate planning. They include the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, The Nature Conservancy, and the Ridge and Valley Conservancy. In addition, creative partnerships with local agencies, the agricultural community, local landowners, and corporations are critical in helping preserve the natural heritage within the Kittatinny Ridge and Valley region.

### To learn more:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's New Jersey Field Office

[www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice)

New Jersey Department of Environment Protection

Green Acres Program

[www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres)

Ridge and Valley Conservancy, Inc.

[www.rvclandtrust.org](http://www.rvclandtrust.org)



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**Federal Relay Service for the deaf  
and hard-of-hearing 800/877 8339**

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